



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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FB13-058

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Comments on Proposed Actions for Black Sea Bass in the South Atlantic

Comment Period Ends August 1, 2013

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on proposed actions in Regulatory Amendment 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on July 2, 2013 (78 FR 39700). Comments must be received on or before **August 1, 2013**.

The health of the black sea bass population in the South Atlantic was assessed in 2013. The black sea bass population is not undergoing overfishing (fish being removed too quickly), is not overfished (too few fish in the population), and is rebuilt. The assessment results suggest the black sea bass catch levels can be increased without jeopardizing the health of the population.

The proposed rule would increase the commercial and recreational annual catch limits and the recreational annual catch target for black sea bass. The sector annual catch limits and recreational annual catch target would change as indicated in the table below.

Fishing Year ¹	Commercial annual catch limit ²	Recreational annual catch limit ²	Recreational annual catch target ²
2013-2014	780,020	1,033,980	903,905
2014-2015	780,020	1,033,980	903,905
2015-2016	780,020	1,033,980	903,905
2016-2017 ²	755,274	1,001,177	875,228

¹The fishing years are from June 1 through May 31.
²Values are in pounds whole weight.
³The annual catch limits for 2016-2017 would remain in place until modified.

Regulatory Amendment 19 would also prohibit the use of black sea bass pots annually from November 1 through April 30, which corresponds to the large whale migration and the right whale calving season in the South Atlantic. The prohibition would be a precautionary measure to prevent interactions between black sea bass pot gear and whales listed under the Endangered Species Act during large whale migrations and the right whale calving season off the southeastern coast.

Request for Comments

Comments on the proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 19 must be received on or before August 1, 2013, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments either electronically or through mail. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

• Go to:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0096>

• Click on "Comment Now!". Complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

• Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

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All comments will be part of the public record, and generally posted for public viewing to www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter, may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. Anonymous comments will be accepted.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Regulatory Amendment 19, can be found online at:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/bsb/index.html and

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>.